



BULLETIN OF THE
SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

February 1952

ROOSTING OF CHICKADEES AND TITMICE

After sundown we often notice birds seeking night shelter in the dense foliage of Douglas firs, live oaks, and chaparral shrubs near our home. With the coming of autumn and winter some of the birds prefer the protected places about our house. For years we have watched chickadees contend for the right to roost on a nail driven halfway into a rafter in a corner under the eaves near the front door. The losing contender for this most desired perch would then settle down on another nail, closer to the door, in a spot less sheltered from the wind.

During the autumn and winter of 1950-1951 two Plain Titmice bunked together every night in a bird box atop a post, just outside our south window. This year only one titmouse has slept in the box. This past autumn the titmouse began roosting in the bird box on August 16, three weeks after the chickadees had chosen the nails as their sleeping quarters. On that date the two chickadees had been on their perches for about 20 minutes when the titmouse went into the box at 7:57 p.m. D.S.T. For the next two weeks we kept almost daily watch of their bedtime, and found that the chickadees regularly went to roost earlier than the titmouse. During the storm of December 1 the bird box was blown down, and although it was set up again several days later the titmouse did not come back. The chickadees, apparently unaffected by the storm, are fluffy balls on the nails outside our front door every night.

Adist G. Boylan, Mt. Hermon, Calif.

THE BIRDS OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Your Editors have begun work on the manuscript of a new and expanded check-list of the birds of Santa Clara County and adjacent areas. In this list the seasonal status, relative abundance, and ecological and geographical distribution within the county and adjacent parts of San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Alameda, and San Benito counties will be summarized. Unusual records of occurrence will be given in full.

There are several ways in which the entire membership can help us to make this list as complete as possible.

- (1). Send in data on any and all records of occurrence for birds in this area.
- (2). Arrival and departure dates of migrants.
- (3). Dates and localities of any unusual species, for example, wintering hawks, shorebirds, migrant hummingbirds, migrant warblers, wintering Clark Nutcrackers, Townsend Solitaires, Red Crossbills, Evening Grosbeaks, Slate-colored Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, ETC.
- (4). The locations of nesting colonies of herons, egrets, Black-necked Stilts, Avocets, Caspian and Forster terns, all species of colonial swallows and colonial blackbirds. Records of former colonies not now active are equally desirable.
- (5). Nesting records for all species. Dates when nest building, eggs, or young have been observed.
- (6). Records of the occurrence of exceptionally large numbers of any species.

MARCH 1 is the deadline---we intend to have this list completed before April 1. Please send in your records right away---and please don't assume that we already have them.

Charles Sibley and Emily Smith

Several persons have sent in suggestions for the format and content of the Bulletin. We especially wish to thank Agnes Prusman, Percy Gibbs, and Viola Anderson. The Wren-tit design of this months heading was Mrs. Anderson's idea.

C A L E N D A R F O R F E B R U A R Y

THE FOURTH AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR will be presented on Friday, February 1, in the Montgomery Theatre, San Jose Civic Auditorium, at 8 o'clock. Leonard Hall will conduct a Screen Tour through eleven of "Our National Parks." Amid magnificent scenery Mr. Hall's film shows beautiful wild flowers and fine forest trees; the astonishing water ouzel which can walk under water along creek bottoms, woodpeckers, grizzly bears, porcupines, and many other wild creatures. Mr. Hall is a widely known writer and lecturer. At his famed "Possum Trot Farm" in Missouri he has learned at first hand conservation lessons which are the basis for his missionary work in behalf of conservation practices and methods. To his Screen Tour audiences he brings a profound conviction of the importance of conservation education; and in "Our National Parks," the necessity of keeping our parks free from destructive commercial uses which threaten them. Tickets are 74 cents (students, 50 cents) and can be had at the door.

THE JOINT TRIP WITH MONTEREY PENINSULA AUDUBON SOCIETY to Moss Landing, scheduled for January 12, had to be postponed (that was the week-end of wind, rain, and high water) to Sunday, February 3. The meeting place will be on the construction road (so labeled) north of cement bridge over Elkhorn Slough. The time has been set at 10 a.m., but the leaders, Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Anderson, will be there an hour earlier, if you feel like an early start. Bring lunch.

THE CASTLE ROCK AND SUMMIT ROAD TRIP also had to be postponed, to Saturday, February 9. The meeting place will be in Saratoga, at the parking place in front of Campbell's Market, on the Saratoga-Los Gatos Road, at 8:30 a.m. Bring lunch. Mrs. McBryan has in mind an alternative trip in the Saratoga area, if again there is snow on the Summit Road.

THE REGULAR FEBRUARY MEETING will be held in Palo Alto, Monday, Feb. 11, in the Junior Museum, at the Palo Alto Community Center, at 8 p.m. Dr. Charles G. Sibley has generously consented to speak again on the nesting behavior of birds, in response to requests from Palo Alto members who could not attend the January meeting in San Jose. Dr. Sibley's talk will be in the way of an introduction to the Cooperative Nesting Survey which the Society is being asked to undertake. Guests are always welcome at our meetings.

Leona Jakobsen, Program Chairman.

A MIDWEEK BIRD TRIP will be taken Wednesday morning, February 13, to Mrs. Arthur H. Jones's garden on West Heights, and along trails in that Bainter Ave. area. Meet at 8:45 a.m. at the Quito Fire Station, on the Saratoga-Los Gatos Road, about halfway between Saratoga and Los Gatos.

FIELD TRIP TO CRYSTAL SPRINGS RESERVOIRS will be taken Sunday, Feb. 24, with Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Wittgenstein as leaders. The Wittgensteins are hoping to obtain permission to go onto the San Francisco Water Works property, so that we can get off the highway and closer to the lakes. Meet in Palo Alto at the S. P. Station at 8 a.m. Bring lunch. If the weather is likely to be bad and there is question as to taking the trip, phone C. L. Sleeper in Menlo Park or Miss Emily Smith in Los Gatos.

A SECOND MIDWEEK BIRD TRIP will be taken Wednesday morning, February 27. The first hour will be spent in Mrs. E. I. Miller's garden in Palo Alto, and the rest of the morning at Lagunita on the Stanford Campus. Meet at Mrs. Miller's home, 159 Melville Ave. (between Alma and Emerson Streets) at 9 a.m.

OUR 1951 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT was planned and successfully conducted by Charles Sibley. The following report, compiled according to strict instructions, was sent to the National Audubon Society and will appear in the April issue of "Audubon Field Notes," along with Bird Counts from all over the country.

San Jose, Calif. (7½-mile radius centering at Mabury Rd. and Capitol Av. and including Alviso, Evergreen, Hall's Valley, and Calaveras Reservoir; salt marshes and mud flats 10%, fresh water marsh 10%, oak woodland 30%, deciduous orchard 20%, pasture and grassland 10%, city and suburbs 10%). Dec. 30; 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Squally with intermittent showers, hail, and snow flurries above 1000' in Hall's Valley; temp. 30 to 50; wind N to NW, up to 50 m.p.h. in violent gusts, highest tidal rise in many years at Alviso flooded all salt marsh and tidal flat areas by 3:00 p.m. 26 observers in 10 parties. Total party hours, 75 (30 on foot, 45 by car); total party miles, 262 (20 on foot, 240 by car).

Hared Grebe, 10; W. Grebe, 1; Pied-billed Grebe, 1; Great Blue Heron, 11; Am. Egret, 106; Whistling Swan, 7; Canada Goose, 500±50; White-fronted Goose, 2; Snow Goose, 2; Mallard, 17; Pintail, 1000±100; Green-winged Teal, 17; Cinnamon Teal, 2; Shoveller, 3000±300; Wood Duck, 2; Ring-necked Duck, 68; Canvas-back, 2; Lesser Scaup, 16; Ruddy Duck, 750±50; White-tailed Kite, 12; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1; Cooper's Hawk, 3; Red-tailed Hawk, 30; Ferruginous Hawk, 1; Golden Eagle, 4; Marsh Hawk, 15; Peregrine Falcon, 2; Sparrow Hawk, 46; Calif. Quail, 142; Ring-necked Pheasant, 3; Sora, 1; Am. Coot, 4000±500; Killdeer, 500±50; Black-bellied Plover, 116; Wilson's Snipe, 26; Long-billed Curlew, 35; Hudsonian Curlew, 1; Willet, 300±50; Greater Yellow-legs, 4; Least Sandpiper, 500±50; Red-backed Sandpiper, 35; Dowitcher, 98; W. Sandpiper, 5000±500; Am. Avocet, 134; Glaucous-winged Gull, 17; Herring Gull, 6; Calif. Gull, 110; Ring-billed Gull, 135; Short-billed Gull, 14; Bonaparte's Gull, 100; unidentified gulls (probably mostly Calif. and Ring-billed), 3000±500; Forster's Tern, 1; Mourning Dove, 17; Barn Owl, 2; Screech Owl, 1; Burrowing Owl, 6; Short-eared Owl, 2; Anna's Hummingbird, 5; Belted Kingfisher, 3; Red-shafted Flicker, 78; Acorn Woodpecker, 12; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 3; Nuttall's Woodpecker, 5; Black Phoebe, 21; Say's Phoebe, 4; Horned Lark, 38; Tree Swallow, 40; Steller's Jay, 21; Scrub Jay, 65; Yellow-billed Magpie, 79; Am. Crow, 65; Chestnut-backed Chickadee, 51; Plain Titmouse, 20; Common Bushtit, 105; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Brown Creeper, 1; Wren-tit, 5; Am. Dipper, 1; Bewick's Wren, 8; Long-billed Marsh Wren, 3; Rock Wren, 1; Mockingbird, 51; Calif. Thrasher, 2; Am. Robin, 1000±100; Varied Thrush, 29; Hermit Thrush, 12; W. Bluebird, 91; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 33; Water Pipit, 400±50; Cedar Waxwing, 125±25; Loggerhead Shrike, 32; Hutton's Vireo, 3; Myrtle Warbler, 4; Audubon's Warbler, 500±25; Townsend's Warbler, 1; Common Yellow-throat, 1; House Sparrow, 550±25; W. Meadowlark, 750±25; Red-winged Blackbird, 22; Brewer's Blackbird, 5500±500; Evening Grosbeak, 1 (coming to feed tray since Dec. 21); Purple Finch, 10; House Finch, 1800±25; Pine Siskin, 12; Am. Goldfinch, 325±25; Lesser Goldfinch, 750±25; Spotted Towhee, 8; Brown Towhee, 125; Savannah Sparrow, 750±25; Lark Sparrow, 22; Rufous-crowned Sparrow, 2; Ore. Junco, 500±50; White-crowned Sparrow, 875±50; Golden-crowned Sparrow, 350±10; Lincoln's Sparrow, 10; Song Sparrow, 92. Total, 115 species; about 35,310 individuals.

Eva Allen, Mr. and Mrs. Lester Brubaker, Jim Burdick, Neil Dickinson, Bob Golden, Henri Hill, Elsie Hoeck, Janet Koppel, Esther Ollis, Anne Peterson, Jim Peterson, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Prusman, Mr. and Mrs. Milton Seibert, Charles Sibley (compiler), Les Sleeper, Emily Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Irving Snow, Stanley Thompson, Matt Vessel, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Wittgenstein, Al Wool, and Fanny Zwaal.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS (Send your records to the Editors)

The Robins and Cedar Waxwings have arrived in large numbers in the Los Gatos area. There were "at least a thousand" Robins in Aldercroft Heights from Dec. 25-28 ('Lina Snow) and on Dec. 28 Dorothy Foster observed "myriads" alight in the redwoods at Chemeketa Park. Dorothy Williams reported 200 Robins and as many Cedar Waxwings eating "redberries" on Jan. 11 in Los Gatos. Emily Smith observed huge flocks of Robins and Cedar Waxwings between Jan. 7-14 in the Glen Una area. Both species were feeding on Toyon, Pyracantha, and Cotoneaster berries. More than a thousand Robins and 2-300 waxwings roosted in evergreens at the corner of Belle Court and Glen Una on Jan. 15. On Jan. 12 Charles Sibley observed at least a thousand Robins flying easterly over his home and dropping into the live oaks to roost. Since that date several hundred Robins and Cedar Waxwings have been feeding there on Pyracantha and Cotoneaster berries. One Robin was a partial albino, white except for the wings and some scattered dusky spots.

Varied Thrushes are present in unusual numbers at Mt. Hermon this winter. Mrs. Boylan has seen more this year than since 1949. They are also abundant in the lower canyons near Los Gatos. (E. Smith and C. Sibley)

Evening Grosbeak. One (female?) visited the Zwaal's feeding tray in San Jose daily between Dec. 21 and 31 but has not been seen since.

Orange-crowned Warbler. One in Aldercroft on Dec. 21, reported by Mrs. Snow.

American Egret. Al Wool saw 26 in a field just east of Milpitas on Jan. 13 following the heavy rains and floods in the Alviso area. Before the floods not more than 2 or 3 had been present. Al also observed a Ferruginous Hawk near Moffet Field on Dec. 21, 22, and 23. On the 22nd. it was seen to catch a gopher. Dorothy Wool reports a Whistling Swan on "Wool's Pond" (or is it now a lake!) on Dec. 22. The swan circled and settled to feed for 2½ hours. Quite a bird to see in your own "yard".

Mrs. Snow saw a flock of nearly 100 American Goldfinches feeding on sycamore seeds in Aldercroft on Jan. 13 and Emily Smith reports a flock of 50 picking seeds out from redwood cones at the Saratoga-Big Basin road junction on Jan. 20. A large flock of Chestnut-backed Chickadees were also feeding on the redwood seeds. A male Lawrence Goldfinch was in the Glen Una area on Jan. 9 (Emily Smith).

SIGNS OF SPRING

The nesting season is rapidly approaching. Birds are forming pairs and prospecting for nest sites. Song is increasing almost daily as territorial species begin to stake out their domains. On Jan. 2 a female California Thrasher was observed to crouch with quivering wings in front of her mate and Jan. 7 a female Song Sparrow was seen in the same display. On Jan 23 a pair of Plain Titmice investigated a bird house, one entered and the other looked in. (Emily Smith).

On Jan. 2 Mrs. Boylan observed a Chestnut-backed Chickadee at Mt. Hermon which "thinks it is spring and shakes her wings and flirts to beat all".

Song Sparrows, California Thrashers, and Wren-tits sing sporadically all winter. All three have increased the amount of singing in the past week and on Jan. 24 a Spotted Towhee sang repeatedly for several minutes near Los Gatos. A few songs of a Spotted Towhee were heard on Jan. 18. (Charles Sibley)

Before the next issue of the Bulletin there should be some arrivals of migrants (Allen Hummer at least) and some reports of nests. Let us hear about them!

C.S.

The Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB will be held in San Francisco, May 9-11, 1952. The meeting will be held in the new Morrison Auditorium of the California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park. There will be sessions for the presentation of scientific papers on Friday and Saturday (May 9, 10) and an all day field trip to Marin Co. on Sunday, May 11. The annual banquet will be held on Saturday evening. The program will include several movies on birds. The members of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society are invited (and urged) to attend the meetings. You are also cordially invited to join the Cooper Club.

SOME INTERESTING RECORDS FOR THE SOUTH BAY AREA

In the course of recent work on the forthcoming new check-list (see page 1 of the present Bulletin) a number of interesting records have come to my attention. To date there have been 272 species of birds recorded in the area to be covered by the list. This does not include oceanic birds unless they were recorded on San Francisco Bay. A large percentage of the rarities are due to the work of the late Chase Littlejohn of Redwood City and to W.E. Unglish of Gilroy. Littlejohn collected such species as the Fulmar, Ashy Petrel, Ross Goose, Black Brant, Barrow Golden-eye, Black (American) Scoter, Black Rail, Yellow Rail, and Ancient Murrelet in the marshes or on the Bay near Redwood City. Unglish has worked the southern part of the Santa Clara Valley for over 40 years. Soap Lake on the Pacheco Pass road, the Pajaro River and Uvas Creek are some of his favorite spots. To him we owe the first county records of Florida Gallinule (breeding at Soap Lake), Texas Nighthawk breeding near Coyote (later studied by Gayle Pickwell and Emily Smith), the Calliope Hummingbird, nesting Least Bell Vireo, and (with Mr. Eschenburg) wintering Harris Sparrow.

Some other notable records by other observers include a Little Blue Heron at Mt. View (Watson), Blue-winged Teal (Sibley, Alviso), at least three old records of the California Condor, two Goshawks (Unglish and Wool), several Pigeon Hawks, Golden Plover (McLean, Alviso), Wilson Phalarope, Mexican Ground Dove (Pescadero), Black Swift breeding at Berry Creek Falls in the Santa Cruz Mountains (Emily Smith), Black-and-White Warbler at Stevens Creek (Sibley), many records for Townsend Solitaire and Evening Grosbeak, Bobolink (Littlejohn, Redwood City), Cassin Purple Finch, 5 miles south of San Jose (Barlow), Green-tailed Towhee (McLean, near Evergreen), Sharp-tailed Sparrow in marsh near Milpitas (two collected by Beck), Swamp Sparrow (Daly City).

The history of the American Egret is a lesson in the value of bird protection. Before 1880 egrets were common in the San Francisco Bay region. Due to plume hunting for the millinery trade they declined to the verge of extinction and not a single American Egret was observed in the South Bay area from 1880 to 1928, a period of 48 years! In 1928 a few were found in San Mateo County. Since then they have increased rapidly and now are the most abundant member of the heron family in the area.

Plume hunting was stopped in 1900 by the famous Lacey Act which prohibited the traffic in the plumage of wild North American birds. The American Egret began to increase in the San Joaquin Valley by 1911 and a few were seen in the Suisun marshes between 1921 and 1924. The Audubon Society and the American Ornithologists Union were instrumental in the passage of the Lacey Act.

Charles Sibley

* * * * *

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Editorial

A Ruby-crowned Kinglet "in a swivet"
Rates all of the time that you can give it,
For once that he starts "seeing red"
Presto! upon his plain drab head
A ruby shows--so plain that you
Will actually see red too.

* Dear Postess Marjorie Kohlman Davis
* We enjoyed your verse on this rara avis
* But we've searched thru' our Webster
* (All the time we could give it)
* To try to discover-----
* Wotineck is a "swivet"??

It does his wife no good to fret,
She's never worn a ruby yet.

Ed.

Marjorie Kohlman Davis

* * * * *

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, Branch of the NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

President --- Albert J. Wool, Rt. 2, Box 728, San Jose
Corr. Sec. -- Miss Eva Allen, P.O. Box 772, Los Gatos
Editor ----- Charles G. Sibley, Rt. 1, Box 241, Los Gatos
Assoc. Ed. -- Miss Emily Smith, Rt. 1, Box 387, Los Gatos